

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

TUSLA Identifier:	TU2015DL006			
Name of Service:	Ardara Community Childcare Ltd			
Address of Service:	Charlie Bennett Drive, Ardara, Co. Donegal			
Eircode:	F94 D825			
Name of Registered Provider:	David Kelly			
Service type:	Full Day			
Date of Inspection:	08/07/2025			
No of pre-school children:	AM	23	PM	20
Address of the Early Years Inspectorate:	Early Years Inspectorate, TUSLA Child & Family Agency, Markievicz House, Barrack St, Sligo, F91 XC84			
Inspection undertaken by:	K Folan			
Title:	Early Years Inspector			

Authority to Inspect

The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013).

Conditions if applicable	Not applicable
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Description of service

Ardara Community Childcare Ltd. is a not-for-profit pre-school service situated in Ardara, Co. Donegal. The service offers full day care, part-time and sessional care to pre-school children aged 0 – 6 years. The service’s operating hours are between 07:45 to 18:00, Monday to Friday. A school age service is also provided. The service operates from a two-storey facility which was purpose-built for the provision of the early years’ service. There are four childcare rooms available. Three rooms are located on the ground floor namely the baby, toddler and ‘Junior Einstein’s’ rooms. One large room located on the first floor accommodated ‘Little Stars’. The premises also includes two sleep rooms, a kitchen where meals for children are prepared, a staff room, an office, and relevant sanitary and storage facilities. There is a large outdoor play area to the rear of the building which has been sub-divided for use by the different groups of children and a large area for use mainly by school age children.

Staffing

There were 19 staff employed to work in the service at the time of inspection not including the registered provider who does not work in the service on a daily basis. Of the 19 staff members, 13 were employed to work directly with children with the reminder employed to carry out a number of duties such as management, administration, food preparation, maintenance and cleaning. One member of staff was employed as part of a work placement activation programme.

Methodology

Tusla’s Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance, health, welfare and development of child, safety, premises and facilities. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9,11,15,16,19,23,25,26 and 28. These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, person in charge, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,*
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and*
- (c) there is a clear management structure in the service that identifies the lines of authority and accountability in the service and the specific roles and responsibilities of each employee and unpaid worker.*

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,*
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,*
- (c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and*
- (d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.*

Compliance Information

- (1)
- (a) There was a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise in their absence.
 - (b) Records demonstrated that at all times the service was in operation, the person in charge or the named deputy was on the premises.
 - (c) There was a clear management structure in place that identified staff's role and responsibilities in the service.
- (2)
- 20 files were reviewed including the registered providers.
- (a) 33 written and validated references were available from a past employer.
 - (b) 7 written and validated references were available from a reputable source.
 - (c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all staff. However, the service did not adhere to the re-vetting timeframes as outlined in the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice, requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years. Please refer to the information outlined under regulation 23 of this report.
 - (d) Police vetting from the police authorities in another state was available for one staff who had lived outside the state for a period of six consecutive months or more.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), a registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 1 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.

Compliance Information

(1) On the day of the inspection, the registered provider ensured that an adequate number of staff were working directly with the children.

(2) On the morning of the inspection 23 children were cared for by 7 staff.

- In the Baby room, 4 children aged 9 months to 1 year and 7 months were cared for by 2 staff.
- In the Toddler room, 5 children aged between 1 year and 9 months to 1 year and 11 months were cared for by 1 staff.
- In the Little Stars room, 10 children aged between 2 years and 8 months to 4 years were cared for by 2 staff.
- In the Junior Einstein room, 4 children aged between 4 to 5 years were cared for by 2 staff.

In the afternoon, 20 children were cared for by 6 staff.

- In the Baby room, 4 children aged 9 months to 1 year and 7 months were cared for by 2 staff.
- In the Toddler room, 5 children aged between 1 year and 9 months to 1 year and 11 months were cared for by 1 staff.
- In the Little Stars room, 8 children aged between 2 years and 8 months to 4 years were cared for by 2 staff.
- In the Junior Einstein room, 3 children aged between 4 to 5 years were cared for by 1 staff.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 15 – Record of pre-school child

(1) A registered provider of a pre-school service other than a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a temporary pre-school service shall ensure that a record in writing is kept in respect of each pre-school child attending the service containing the following particulars:

- (a) the name and date of birth of the child;*
- (b) the date on which the child first attended the service;*
- (c) the date on which the child ceased to attend the service;*
- (d) the name and address of a parent or guardian of the child and a telephone number where that parent or guardian or a relative or friend of the child can be contacted during the hours of operation of the service;*
- (e) authorisation for the collection of the child;*
- (f) details of any illness, disability, allergy or special need of the child, together with all the information relevant to the provision of special care or attention;*
- (g) the name and telephone number of the child's registered medical practitioner;*
- (h) record of immunisations, if any, received by the child;*
- (i) written parental consent for appropriate medical treatment of the child in the event of an emergency.*

(3) A record in writing referred to in paragraph (1) or (2) shall be open to inspection on the premises by-

- (c) an authorised person.*

Compliance Information

(1) A sample of 10 children's file were reviewed on inspection. Of the 10 files inspected, all contained the relevant information required in (a) to (i).

(3) (c) The records were made available to the inspector on the day.

Part IV – Information and Records

Regulation 16 – Record in relation to pre-school service

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of the following information in relation to the service:

- (a) the name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge and of every other employee, unpaid worker and contractor;*
- (b) details of the class of service and the age profile of children for which the service is registered to provide services;*
- (c) details of the adult:child ratios in the service;*
- (d) the type of care or programme provided in the service;*
- (e) the facilities available;*
- (f) the opening hours and fees;*
- (g) the policies, procedures and statements the service is required to maintain in accordance with Regulation 10;*
- (h) details of attendance by each pre-school child on a daily basis;*
- (i) details of staff rosters on a daily basis;*
- (j) details of any medication administered to a pre-school child attending the service with signed parental consent;*
- (k) details of any accident, injury or incident involving a pre-school child attending the service.*

Compliance Information

(1) The required records (a) to (k) were kept by the service and available on the day of inspection.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

- (a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and*
- (b) appropriate and suitable care practices are in place in the pre-school service, having regard to the number of children attending the service and the nature of their needs.*

Compliance Information

Basic need

- There is a healthy eating policy in place in the service.
- The service provides all food to the children which include, breakfast, mid-morning snack, dinner and afternoon snack. On the day of the inspection, mid-morning snack was wheaten bread with jam and fruit, dinner was homemade breaded fish with potatoes, sweetcorn and gravy, afternoon snack was waffles, beans and fruit. Drinking water was available to the children throughout the day.
- Children with allergies were catered for in the service.
- Nappy changing was carried out at regularly and promptly throughout the day. Nappy changing time was used as an opportunity for warm one to one interaction between staff and children.
- Aprons were provided for messy play. Spare clothes were available for children who required a change of clothes throughout the day.
- The individual sleep needs of younger children were met, and this was observed on the day by children in the baby room sleeping at various intervals according to their needs. In the toddler room, sleep time was scheduled in the afternoon for all children who required sleep. For older children who did not require sleep, rest facilities were available in each care room.
- Each care room was spacious with enough room for children to move around freely.

Supporting relationships

- A key worker system was in place in the service with named staff members assigned the responsibility for designated children. At the entrance to the toddler room, a picture of each child with their name and key workers picture and name were displayed.
- The staff members demonstrated warmth in their interactions with children. For example, in the baby room, staff were observed to be sensitive to the babies' needs by offering reassurance and cuddles when the babies required additional support.
- In 'Little Einsteins' the staff sat with the children and engaged in a range of activities such as water play and clay making. The staff were observed to support children to engage positively with one another in activities that required sharing and turn taking.
- Staff advised the inspector that a technology application was used to communicate with parents during the day. Drop off and pick up times were used as an opportunity to share information with parents about their child's day.

- In Little Stars, Children demonstrated a sense of pride in their success and called staff members to share their achievements and observations. The staff readily acknowledged the children’s effort and accomplishments and encouraged the children’s actions and activities.

Physical and material environment

- Each of the care rooms were bright and spacious with clearly defined areas of interest that children could engage in independently or with other children. Pictures of the children taking part in different activities in the setting were displayed on the walls as was the children’s artwork.
- The baby room had a small area fenced off with soft mats for younger babies. Colourful pictures and posters were displayed on the wall to assist the baby’s visual and language development. Stable props were available to support children to pull to stand and a shatter proof mirror provided additional support to develop visual senses. Age-appropriate toys were available to the children in this room such as spinning objects, shake and rattle toys, dolls, and large plastic bricks for building. Two adult sized chairs were available in the room for the adults to sit and cuddle or feed the babies.
- The toddler room contained age-appropriate tables and chairs for each child in the room. The room had several defined areas of interest such a sensory tray with artificial grass and a farm set, a well-stocked home corner area with play toasters, microwaves, plates and tea sets, a doll house and transport area for small world play and a bookshelf and soft matted area for rest during the day.
- ‘Little Stars’ room was a large spacious room upstairs in the service. There was a painting area which the children had access to all day. Other areas of interest were a construction toy area, dolls and buggy area, a dress up area and a home corner. Sand and water trays containing funnels, boats and containers for pouring were available to the children throughout the session. Low level shelving containing boxes of items such as puzzles, animals and construction toys were accessible to the children.
- ‘Little Einsteins’ room was laid out with many different areas of interest for children such as a water table, sensory play area with sand, a painting and glueing craft area, and a clay making area. The room was well resourced, with materials available on low shelving which the children had access to. Items to support children’s imaginary play such as small cars, trains and magnetic tiles were available to the children in the room. Small soft sofas were available should any child require a rest during the day.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

A registered provider shall ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of a pre-school child attending the service and that the environment of the service is safe.

Compliance Information

General Safety:

- The entrance door was secure upon the inspector's arrival to the service and remained secure throughout the inspection.
- All toys and equipment were observed to be in good condition, free from sharp edges and pinch points.
- The service was in a clean and hygienic condition on the day of inspection. Cleaning records evidenced that a cleaning schedule was in place and cleaning was carried out daily.
- Cleaning materials were stored out of children's reach on high shelving.
- Emergency exit doors were unobstructed.
- The outdoor area was secured with high fencing and gates to prevent a preschool child gaining unsupervised access to the local car park.
- The outdoor area was fitted with a soft fall surface to minimise a risk to children from trips and falls.

Infection Control:

- Children's soothers were stored in individually labelled containers when not in use.
- The inspector observed surfaces being wiped down and cleaned frequently throughout the day.
- Warm water, soap and paper towels were available for effective handwashing for children and adults.

Administration of Medication:

- No medication was administered on the day of the inspection however medicine records from previously administered medication demonstrated that staff were aware of the correct procedure to be carried out to ensure the safe administration of medicine.
- Temperature reducing medication was stored safely, in a locked cabinet out of children's reach.

Safe Sleep:

- Each child under the age of two years had their own individually labelled cot and bed linen.
- All cot mattresses were fitted with a waterproof cover.
- Sleep checks were carried out every 10 minutes and were documented including the date, child's name, sleeping position, colour and breathing pattern of each child.

- The sleep room temperatures were thermostatically controlled and monitored to ensure the correct safe sleep temperature. The temperature of the baby sleep room on the day of inspection was 19.5° Celsius.

Non-Compliance Information

General Safety:

1. Garda vetting was available for the staff members. However, one of these vetting disclosures was not dated within the previous three years and was not in adherence to the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice

Infection Control:

- The mechanism in the pedal operated bin in the baby nappy changing area was broken, which required the lid to be opened by hand, posing a risk of cross contamination.
- Children's hands were not washed after nappy changing. The nappy changing procedure in place in the service did not contain the requirement for children's hands to be washed after nappy changing posing a risk of cross contamination to children.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective & Preventive Action

General Safety:

1. Garda Vetting was applied for and obtained for the staff member. Regular checks will be carried out on the staff files to ensure vetting occurs every three years.

Infection Control:

- A new pedal operated bin is now in place. Broken items will be replaced as soon as management are advised of the issue.
- The nappy changing policy and procedure has been updated and all staff have received a copy. The manager will review policies annually to ensure they are in line with the requirements of the regulations.

Supporting documentation submitted

General Safety:

1. Documentary evidence submitted.

Infection Control:

- Photographic evidence submitted.
- Documentary evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider adequately address the non-compliance found on inspection. This regulation is now compliant.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 24 - Checking in and out and record of attendance

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that each pre-school child attending the service is checked in and out of the service by an employee or an unpaid worker.*
- (3) A registered provider shall ensure that-*
- (a) no person other than-*
 - (i) pre-school child attending the service,*
 - (ii) a person dropping or collecting such a child,*
 - (iii) an employee, or*
 - (iv) an unpaid worker, can enter the premises without his or her entry being approved by an employee, and*
 - (b) a daily record in writing is kept of the entry on the premises of any such person.*
- (4) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing referred to in paragraph (3)(b) is retained for a period of one year from the date to which it relates.*

Compliance Information

- (1) Records demonstrated that each child was checked in and out of the service by staff in each room on a daily basis.
- (3)(a)(b) A visitors' book was provided in the main hallway of the service. Visitors to the service were required to sign in on arrival to the service.
- (4) Records were retained for the required time period of one year.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 25 - First aid

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.*
- (2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children-*
- (a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and*
 - (b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.*

Compliance Information

(1) Six staff in the service were trained in first aid for children. At least one trained member of staff was available to the children at all times.

(2)(a)(b) There were two suitably equipped first aid boxes available in the service, one was stored in the canteen area on the ground floor and the remaining first aid box was stored on the first floor in the care room. Each first aid box was stored in an easily accessible position.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-

(a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and

(b) the number, type and maintenance record of fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.

(4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

Compliance Information

(1)(b) Records were available to evidence that the fire fighting equipment was last serviced in January 2025 and smoke alarms were serviced on 13 May 2025.

(4) Fire evacuation maps were displayed in each area of the service, at child's eye level.

Non-Compliance Information

(1)(a) A record of fire drills was kept by the service with the most recent drill carried out on 23 June 2025.

However, records demonstrated that in the period from January 2025 to July 2025, there was no fire drill carried out on the premises in March or May 2025. Fire drills should be carried out monthly to ensure children are familiar with evacuation procedures in the event of an emergency.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

A yearly schedule of fire drills has been created to ensure drills are carried out monthly. Management will monitor to ensure compliance.

Supporting documentation submitted

Documentary evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The corrective and preventive actions submitted by the registered provider adequately address the non-compliance found on inspection. This regulation is now compliant.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 28 - Insurance

A registered provider shall ensure that the pre-school service is adequately insured.

Compliance Information

The service had adequate insurance in place for 70 children up to 27 March 2026.

Part VII - Premises and Space Requirements

Regulation 29 - Premises

A registered provider shall ensure that the premises of the service are-

- (a) of sound and stable structure,*
- (b) safe and secure,*
- (c) kept adequately lit, heated and ventilated*
- (d) cleaned, maintained and repaired, as required, and*
- (e) equipped with adequate and suitable sanitary facilities.*

Non-Compliance Information

(d) On the day of the inspection, there appeared to be visible signs of deterioration to the outer envelope of the pre-school building.

Part of the masonry overhead the children's outdoor play area in two locations was cracked and visibly defective. Perceptible cracks had also formed on one external wall of the building's façade.

The service manager informed the inspectors that tests carried out on the building had confirmed the presence of defective blockwork in part of the pre-school building. The manager furnished the inspector with a civil engineer's report outlining that annual surveys and maintenance checks are being carried out to ensure the safety of the building.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective and Preventive Action

Checks are carried out annually by our engineer and action is taken on her guidance with any safety and maintenance issues in relation to the defective blockwork. All cracks are filled as soon as they appear, the manager and deputy manager have taken note of each crack as it appears.

Supporting documentation submitted

Photographic evidence submitted.

Summary Comment

The registered provider has submitted evidence of ongoing management and repair of the building, and this has been accepted by the Early Years Inspectorate. This will be reviewed on the next inspection.